

# LIFE AND DEATH

## AND OTHER STORIES AND LEGENDS



HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ



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To Mary with best love  
from  
Aunt Liss

Oct 17<sup>th</sup> '08







# Life and Death

*And Other Legends and Stories*



THE WORKS OF  
HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL POLISH BY  
JEREMIAH CURTIN.

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*The Zagłoba Romances*

WITH FIRE AND SWORD. 1 vol.

THE DELUGE. 2 vols.

PAN MICHAEL. 1 vol.

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QUO VADIS. 1 vol.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS. 2 vols.

CHILDREN OF THE SOIL. 1 vol.

HANIA, AND OTHER STORIES. 1 vol.

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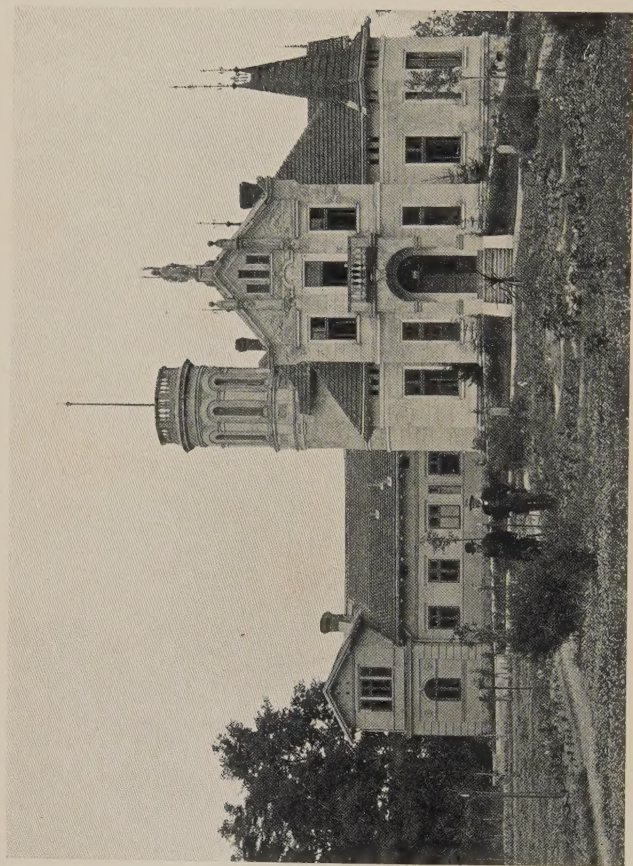
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WITHOUT DOGMA. (Translated by Iza Young.)  
1 vol.





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HOUSE PRESENTED TO HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ BY THE POLES  
Mr. Sienkiewicz and Mr. Curtin in the foreground

# Life and Death

*And Other Legends and Stories*

By

Henryk Sienkiewicz

Author of "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge,"  
"Pan Michael," "Quo Vadis," "Knights  
of the Cross," etc.

*Translated from the Original Polish by*

Jeremiah Curtin

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## P R E F A C E

*“Is He the Dearest One?”* was produced under the following circumstances: About fourteen years ago there was a famine, or at least hunger, in Silesia. Though that land is a German possession at present, it was once a part of the Polish Commonwealth, and there are many un-Germanized Poles in it yet.

The mother in this sketch is Poland. Yasko, the most unfortunate of her sons, is Silesia. Poor, ill-fated, he neglects his own language, forgets his mother; but she does not forget him, as was shown on the occasion of that hunger in

## PREFACE

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*Silesia. The Poles of Russian Poland collected one million marks and sent them to Yasko.*

*The ship "Purple" represents Poland and its career, and is a very brief summary of the essence and meaning of Polish history. Like some of the author's most beautiful short productions, it was written for a benevolent object, all the money obtained for it being devoted to that object.*

*All persons who have read "Charcoal Sketches," in Sienkiewicz's "Hania," will be interested to learn the origin of that striking production. It was written mainly and finished in Los Angeles, Cal., as Sienkiewicz told me in Switzerland six years ago, but it was begun at Anaheim Landing, as is described in the*

## PREFACE

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*sketch printed in this volume, "The Cranes." Besides being begun at Anaheim Landing, the whole plan of "Charcoal Sketches" was worked out there. "The Cranes" appeared in Lvov, or Lemburg, a few years ago, in a paper which was published for one day only, and was made up of contributions from Polish authors who gave these contributions for a benevolent purpose. The Hindu legend, "Life and Death," to be read by Sienkiewicz at Warsaw in January, is his latest work.*

JEREMIAH CURTIN.

*Torbole, Lago di Garda, Austria,  
December 18, 1903.*





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LIFE AND DEATH  
*A HINDU LEGEND*



# LIFE AND DEATH

## *A HINDU LEGEND*

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### I

#### LIFE AND DEATH

**T**HERE were two regions lying side by side, as it were two immense plains, with a clear river flowing between them.

At one point the banks of this river sloped gently to a shallow ford in the shape of a pond with transparent, calm water.

Beneath the azure surface of this ford could be seen its golden bed, from which grew stems of lotus ; on those stems bloomed white and rose-

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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colored flowers above the mirror of water. Rainbow-hued insects and butterflies circled around the flowers and among the palms of the shore, while higher up in the sunny air birds gave out sounds like those of silver bells. This pond was the passage from one region to the other.

The first region was called the Plain of Life, the second the Plain of Death.

The supreme and all mighty Brahma had created both plains, and had commanded the good Vishnu to rule in the Region of Life, while the wise Siva was lord in the Region of Death.

“Do what ye understand to be best,” said Brahma to the two rulers.



## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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Hence in the region belonging to Vishnu life moved with all its activity. The sun rose and set; day followed night, and night followed day; the sea rose and fell; in the sky appeared clouds big with rain; the earth was soon covered with forests, and crowded with beasts, birds, and people.

So that all living creatures might increase greatly and multiply, the kindly god created Love, which he made to be Happiness also.

After this Brahma summoned Vishnu and said to him :

“Thou canst produce nothing better on earth, and since heaven is created already by me, do thou rest and let those whom thou callest

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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people weave the thread of life for themselves unassisted."

Vishnu obeyed this command, and henceforward men ordered their own lives. From their good thoughts came joy, from their evil ones, sorrow; and they saw soon with wonder that life was not an unbroken rejoicing, but that with the life thread which Brahma had mentioned they wove out two webs as it were with two faces, — on one of these was a smile; there were tears in the eyes of the other.

They went then to the throne of Vishnu and made complaint to him:

"O Lord! life is grievous through sorrow."

"Let Love give you happiness," said Vishnu in answer.

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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At these words they went away quieted, for Love indeed scattered their sorrows, which, in view of the happiness given, seemed so insignificant as to be undeserving of notice.

But Love is also the mighty mother of life, hence, though the region which Vishnu ruled was enormous, it was soon insufficient for the myriads of people; soon there was not fruit enough upon trees there, nor berries enough upon bushes, nor honey enough from cliff bees.

Thereupon all the men who were wisest fell to cutting down forests for the clearing of land, for the sowing of seed, for the winning of harvests.

Thus Labor appeared among people. Soon all had to turn to it, and

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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labor became not merely the basis of life, but life itself very nearly.

But from Labor came Toil, and Toil produced Weariness.

Great throngs of people appeared before Vishnu a second time.

“O Lord!” exclaimed they, stretching their hands to him, “toil has weakened our bodies, weariness spreads through our bones, we are yearning for rest, but Life drives us always to labor.”

To this Vishnu answered :

“The great and all mighty Brahma has not allowed me to shape Life any further, but I am free to make that which will cause it to halt, and rest will come then to you.”

And Vishnu made Sleep.

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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Men received this new gift with rejoicing, and very soon saw in it one of the greatest boons given by the deity thus far. In sleep vanished care and vexation, during sleep strength returned to the weary ; sleep, like a cherishing mother, wiped away tears of sorrow and surrounded the heads of the slumbering with oblivion.

So people glorified sleep, and repeated :

“ Be blessed, for thou art far better than life in our waking hours.”

And they had one regret only, that it did not continue forever. After sleep came awakening, and after awakening came labor with fresh toil and weariness.

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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This thought began soon to torture all men so sorely, that for the third time they stood before Vishnu.

“O Lord,” said they, “thou hast given us a boon which, though great and unspeakably precious, is incomplete as it now appears. Wilt thou grant us that sleep be eternal?”

Vishnu wrinkled his brows then in anger at this their insistence, and answered :

“I cannot give what ye ask of me, but go to the neighboring ford, and beyond ye will find that for which ye are seeking.”

The people heard the god's voice and went on in legions immediately. They went to the ford, and, halt-

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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ing there, gazed at the shore lying opposite.

Beyond the clear, calm, and flower-bedecked surface stretched the Plain of Death, or the Kingdom of Siva.

The sun never rose and never set in that region; there was no day and no night there, but the whole plain was of a lily-colored, absolute clearness. No shadow fell in that region, for clearness inhered there so thoroughly that it seemed the real essence of Siva's dominions.

The region was not empty. As far as the eye could reach were seen heights and valleys where beautiful trees stood in groups; on those trees rose climbing plants, while ivy and



## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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grapevines were hanging from the cliff sides.

But the cliffs and the tree trunks and the slender plant stems were almost transparent, as if formed out of light grown material. The leaves of the ivy had in them a delicate roseate light as of dawn. And all was in marvellous rest, such as none on the Plain of Life had experienced; all was as if sunk in serene meditation, as if dreaming and resting in continuous slumber, unthreatened by waking.

In the clear air not the slightest breeze was discovered, not a flower was seen moving, not a leaf showed a quiver.

The people who had come to the

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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shore with loud conversation and clamor grew silent at sight of those lily-colored, motionless spaces, and whispered :

“What quiet ! How everything rests there in clearness !”

“Oh, yes, there is rest and unbroken repose in that region.”

So some, namely, those who were weariest, said after a silence :

“Let us find the sleep which is surely unbroken.”

And they entered the water. The rainbow-hued surface opened straightway before them, as if wishing to lighten the passage. Those who remained on the shore began now to call after them, but no man turned his head, and all hur-

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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ried forward with willingness and lightly, attracted more and more by the charm of that wonderful region.

The throng which gazed from the shore of Life at them noted this also : that as they moved forward their bodies grew gradually less heavy, becoming transparent and purer, more radiant, and as it were blending with that absolute clearness which filled the whole Plain of Death, Siva's kingdom.

And when they had passed and disposed themselves amid flowers and at trees or the bases of cliffs, to repose there, their eyes were closed, but their faces had on them not only an expression of ineffable peace, but also of happiness such as Love

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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itself on the Plain of Life had never given.

Seeing this, those who had halted behind said one to another :

“The region belonging to Siva is sweeter and better.”

And they began to pass to that shore in increasing numbers. There went in solemn procession old men, and men in ripe years, and husbands and wives, and mothers who led little children, and maidens, and youths, and then thousands and millions of people pushed on toward that Calm Passage, till at last the Plain of Life was depopulated almost entirely.

Then Vishnu, whose task it was to keep life from extinction, was frightened because of the advice which he

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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had given in his anger, and not knowing what to do else hastened quickly to Brahma.

“Save Life, O Creator!” said he. “Behold, thou hast made the inheritance of Death now so beautiful, so serene, and so blissful that all men are leaving my kingdom.”

“Have none remained with thee there?” inquired Brahma.

“Only one youth and one maiden, who are in love beyond measure; they renounce endless bliss rather than close their eyes and gaze on each other no longer.”

“What dost thou wish, then?”

“Make the region of Death less delightful, less happy; if not, even those two when their springtime of

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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love shall be ended will leave me and follow the others."

Brahma thought for a moment and answered :

"No ! Oh no ! I will not decrease beauty and happiness in the region of Death, but I will do something for Life in its own realm. Henceforward people will not pass to the other shore willingly, they must be forced to it."

When he had said this he made a thick veil out of darkness which no one could see through, and next he created two terrible beings, one of these he named Fear and the other one Pain. He commanded them then to hang that black veil at the Passage.

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

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Thereafter Vishnu's kingdom was as crowded with life as it had been, for though the region of Death was as calm, as serene, and as blissful as ever, people dreaded the Passage.





SMALL CHAPEL ON THE SIENKIEWICZ ESTATE



IS HE THE DEAREST ONE ?



## II

### IS HE THE DEAREST ONE?

**I**N the distance a dark strip of pine wood was visible. In front of the wood was a meadow, and amid fields of grain stood a cottage covered with a straw roof and with moss. Birch trees hung their tresses above it. On a fir tree stood a stork on its nest, and in a cherry garden were dark beehives.

Through an open gate a wanderer walked into the yard and said to the mistress of the cottage, who was standing on its threshold :

## *IS HE THE DEAREST ONE?*

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“Peace to this quiet house, to those trees, to the grain, to the whole place, and to thee, mother!”

The woman greeted him kindly, and added:

“I will bring bread and milk to thee, wayfarer; but sit down the while and rest, for it is clear that thou art coming back from a long journey.”

“I have wandered like that stork, and like a swallow; I come from afar, I bring news from thy children.”

Her whole soul rushed to the eyes of that mother, and she asked the wayfarer straightway:

“Dost thou know of my Yasko?”

“Dost thou love that son most that thou askest first about him?”

## *IS HE THE DEAREST ONE?*

---

Well, one son of thine is in forests, he works with his axe, he spreads his net in lakes; another herds horses in the steppe, he sings plaintive songs and looks at the stars; the third son climbs mountains, passes over naked rocks and high pastures, spends the night with sheep and shouts at the eagles. All bend down before thy knees and send thee greeting."

"But Yasko?" asked the mother with an anxious face.

"I keep sad news for the last. Life is going ill with Yasko: the field does not give its fruit to him, poverty and hunger torment the man, his days and months pass in suffering. Amid strangers and misery he has even forgotten thy language; forget

## *IS HE THE DEAREST ONE?*

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him, since he has no thought for thee.”

When he had finished, the woman took the man’s hand, led him to her pantry in the cottage, and, seizing a loaf from the shelf, she said :

“ Give this bread, O wayfarer, to Yasko ! ”

Then she untied a small kerchief, took a bright silver coin from it, and with trembling voice added :

“ I am not rich, but this too is for Yasko.”

“ Woman ! ” said the wayfarer now with astonishment, “ thou hast many sons, but thou sendest gifts to only one of them. Dost thou love him more than the others ? Is he the dearest one ? ”



## *IS HE THE DEAREST ONE?*

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She raised her great sad eyes, filled with tears, and answered :

“ My blessing is for them all, but my gifts are to Yasko, for I am a mother, and he is my poorest son.”



A . . . . .

A LEGEND OF THE SEA



### III

## A LEGEND OF THE SEA

**T**HERE was a ship named "The Purple," so strong and so great that she feared neither winds nor waves, even when they were raging most terribly.

"The Purple" swept on, with every sail set, she rose upon each swelling wave and crushed with her conquering prow hidden rocks on which other ships foundered. She moved ever forward with sails which were gleaming in sunlight, and moved with such swiftness that foam roared

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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at her sides and stretched out behind in a broad, endless road-streak.

“That is a glorious craft,” cried out crews on all other ships; “a man might think that she sails just to punish the ocean.”

From time to time they called out to the crew of “The Purple”:

“Hei, men, to what port are ye sailing?”

“To that port to which wind blows,” said the men on “The Purple.”

“Have a care, there are rocks ahead! There are whirlpools!”

In reply to this warning came back a song as loud as the wind was:

“Let us sail on, let us sail ever joyously.”

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

---

Men on "The Purple" were glad-some. The crew, confiding in the strength of their ship and the size of it, jeered at all perils. On other ships stern discipline ruled, but on "The Purple" each man did what seemed good to him.

Life on that ship was one ceaseless holiday. The storms which she had passed, the rocks which she had crushed, increased the crew's confidence. "There are no reefs, there are no winds to wreck this ship," roared the sailors. "Let a hurricane shiver the ocean, 'The Purple' will always sail forward."

And "The Purple" sailed ; she was proud, she was splendid.

Whole years passed — she was to

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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all seeming invincible, she helped other ships and took in on her deck drowning passengers.

Blind faith increased every day in the breasts of the crew on "The Purple." They grew slothful in good fortune and forgot their own art, they forgot how to navigate. "Our 'Purple' will sail herself," said they. "Why toil, why watch the ship, why pull at rudder, masts, sails, and ropes? Why live by hard work and the sweat of our brows, when our ship is divine, indestructible? Let us sail on, let us sail joyously."

And they sailed for a very long period. At last, after years, the crew became utterly effeminate, they forgot every duty, and no man of them



## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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knew that that ship was decaying. Bitter water had weakened the spars, the strong rigging had loosened, waves without number had shattered the gunwales, dry rot was at work in the mainmast, the sails had grown weak through exposure.

The voice of sound sense was heard now despite every madness :

“ Be careful ! ” cried some of the sailors.

“ Never mind ! We will sail with the current,” cried out the majority. But once such a storm came that to that hour its like had not been on the water. The wind whirled ocean and clouds into one hellish chaos. Pillars of water rose up and flew then with roars at “ The

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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Purple” ; they were raging and bel-  
lowing dreadfully. They fell on  
the ship, they drove her down to the  
bottom, they hurled her up to the  
clouds, then cast her down again.  
The weak rigging snapped, and now  
a quick cry of despair was heard on  
the deck of that vessel.

“ ‘ The Purple ’ is sinking ! ”

“ The Purple ” was really sinking,  
while the crew, unaccustomed to  
work and to navigate, knew not how  
to save her.

But when the first moment of terror  
had passed, rage boiled up in their  
hearts, for those mariners still loved  
that ship of theirs.

All sprang up speedily, some rushed  
to fire cannon-balls at the winds and

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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foaming water, others seized what each man could find near him and flogged that sea which was drowning "The Purple."

Great was that fight of despair against the elements. But the waves had more strength than the mariners. The guns filled with water and then they were silent. Gigantic whirls seized struggling sailors and swept them out into watery chaos.

The crew decreased every minute, but they struggled on yet. Covered with water, half-blinded, concealed by a mountain of foam, they fought till they dropped in the battle.

Strength left them, but after brief rest they sprang again to the struggle.

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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At last their hands fell. They felt that death was approaching. Dull despair seized them. Those sailors looked at one another as if demented.

Now those same voices which had warned previously of danger were raised again, and more powerfully, so powerfully this time that the roar of the waves could not drown them.

Those voices said :

“O blind men ! How can ye cannonade wind, or flog waves ? Mend your vessel ! Go to the hold. Work there. The ship ‘Purple’ is afloat yet.”

At these words those mariners, half-dead already, recovered, all rushed to the hold and began then to work

## *A LEGEND OF THE SEA*

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in it. And they worked from morning till night in the sweat of their brows and with effort, seeking thus to retrieve their past sloth and their blindness.



## THE CRANES





## IV

### THE CRANES

**H**OMESICKNESS (nostalgia) tortures mainly people who for various reasons are utterly unable to return to their own country, but even those for whom return is merely a question of will power feel its attacks sometimes. The cause may be anything: a sunrise or a sunset which calls to mind a dawn or an evening at home, some note of a foreign song in which the rhythm of one's own country is heard; some group of trees which

## THE CRANES

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call to mind remotely the native village — anything suffices !

At such moments an immense, irresistible sadness seizes hold on the heart, and immediately a feeling comes to a man that he is, as it were, a leaf torn away from a distant but beloved tree. And in such moments the man is forced to return, or, if he has imagination, he is driven to create.

Once — a good many years back — I was sojourning on the shore of the Pacific Ocean in a place called Anaheim Landing. My society was made up of some sailor fishermen, Norwegians for the greater part, and a German, who gave food to those fishermen and lodged them. Their

## *THE CRANES*

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days were passed on the water ; every evening they amused themselves with poker, a game at cards which years ago was common in all the dram-shops of America, long before fashionable ladies in Europe began to play it. I was quite alone, and my time passed in wandering with a gun over the open plain or along the shore of the Pacific. I visited the sandbanks which a small river made as with a broad mouth it entered the ocean ; I waded in the shallow waters of this river, noted its unknown fishes, its shells, and looked at the great sea-lions which sunned themselves on a number of rocks at the river mouth. Opposite was a small sandy island swarming with mews,

## *THE CRANES*

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pelicans, and albatrosses; a real and populous bird commonwealth, filled with cries and uproar.

At times, when the day was calm, and when amid silence the surface of the water took on a tinge almost violet, changing into gold, I sat in a boat and rowed toward the little island, on which pelicans, unused to the sight of man, looked at me less with fear than astonishment, as if wishing to ask, "What sort of seal is this that we have not seen till to-day?" Frequently I looked from that bank at sunsets which were simply marvellous; they changed the whole horizon into one sea, gleaming with gold, fire, and opal, which, passing into a brilliant purple, faded

## *THE CRANES*

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gradually until the moon shone on the amethyst background of the heavens, and the wonderful semi-tropical night had embraced the earth and the sky. The empty land, the endlessness of the ocean, and the excess of light disposed me somewhat toward mysticism. I became pantheistic, and had the feeling that everything surrounding me formed a certain single great soul which appears as the ocean, the sky, the plain, or diminishes into such small living existences as birds, fish, shells, or broom on the ocean shore. At times I thought also that those sand-hills and empty banks might be inhabited by invisible beings like the ancient Greek fauns, nymphs, or naiads. A

## *THE CRANES*

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man does not believe in such things when he turns to his own reason ; but involuntarily he admits that they are possible when he lives only with Nature and in perfect seclusion. Life changes then, as it were, into a drowsiness in which visions are more powerful than thought. As for me, I was conscious only of that boundless calm which surrounded me, and I felt that it was pleasant to be in it. At times I thought of future "letters about my journey" ; at times, too, I, as a young man, thought also of "her," the unknown whom I should meet and love some time. In that relaxation of thought, and on that empty, clear ocean shore, amid those uncompleted ideas, undescribed de-

## *THE CRANES*

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sires, in that half dream, in semi-consciousness, I was happier than ever in life before. But on a certain evening I sat long on the little island and returned to the shore after night-fall. The flowing tide brought me in — I scarcely had need to lift an oar then. In other regions the flow of the tide is tempestuous, but in that land of eternal good weather waves touch the sand shore with gentleness ; the ocean does not strike land with an outburst. Such silence surrounded me that a quarter of a mile from the shore line I could have heard the conversation of men. But that shore was unoccupied. I heard only the squeak of the oars on my boat and the low plash of water moved by them.

## *THE CRANES*

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Just then, from above, certain piercing cries reached me. I raised my head, but on the dark background of the sky I could discern nothing. When the cries were heard a second time, directly above, I recognized in them the voices of cranes.

Evidently a whole flock of cranes was flying somewhere above my head toward the island of Santa Catalina. But I remembered that I had heard cries like those more than once, when as a boy I journeyed from school for vacation — and straightway a mighty homesickness seized hold of me. I returned to the little room which I had hired in the cabin of the German, but could not sleep. Pictures of my country passed then before my mind:





A VIEW OF THE HOUSE FROM THE POND ON THE  
SIENKIEWICZ ESTATE



## *THE CRANES*

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now a pine forest, now broad fields with pear trees on the boundaries, now pleasant cottages, now village churches, now white mansions surrounded by dense orchards. I yearned for such scenes all that night.

I went out next morning, as usual, to the sand-banks. I felt that the ocean and the sky, and the sand mounds on the shore, and the plains, and the cliffs on which seals were basking in the sunlight, were things to me absolutely foreign, things with which I had nothing in common, as they had nothing in common with me.

Only yesterday I had wandered about in that neighborhood and had judged that my pulse was beating in

## *THE CRANES*

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answer to the pulse of that immense universe ; to-day I put to myself this question : What have I to do here ; why do I not go back to my birth-place ? The feeling of harmony and sweetness in life had vanished, leaving nothing behind it. Time, which before had seemed so quiet and soothing, which was measured by the ebb and flow of the ocean, now seemed unendurably tedious. I began to think of my own land, of that which had remained in it, and that which had changed with time's passage.

America and my journey ceased altogether to interest me, and immediately there swarmed in my head a throng of visions ever denser and denser, composed wholly of memories.

## THE CRANES

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I could not tear myself free from them, though they brought no delight to me. On the contrary, there was in those memories much sadness, and even suffering, which rose from comparing our sleepy and helpless country life with the bustling activity of America. But the more our life seemed to me helpless and sleepy, the more it mastered my soul, the dearer it grew to me, and the more I longed for it. During succeeding days the visions grew still more definite, and at last imagination began to develop, to arrange, to bring clearness and order into one artistic plan. I began to create my own world.

A week later, on a certain night when the Norwegians went out on

## *THE CRANES*

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the ocean, I sat down in my little room and from under my pen flowed the following words: "In Barania Glova, in the chancellery of the village mayor, it was as calm as in time of sowing poppy seed."

And thus, because cranes flew over the shore of the Pacific, I composed "Charcoal Sketches."

THE JUDGMENT OF PETER  
AND PAUL ON OLYMPUS





## V

# THE JUDGMENT OF PETER AND PAUL ON OLYMPUS

A POEM IN PROSE

**I**T was a night of spring, calm, silvery, and fragrant with dewy jasmine. The full moon was sailing above Olympus, and on the glittering, snowy summit of the mountain it shone with a clear, pensive, greenish light. Farther down in the Vale of Tempe was a dark thicket of thorn-bushes, shaken by the songs of nightingales — by entreaties, by complaints, by calls, by

## *THE JUDGMENT OF*

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allurements, by languor, by sighs. These sounds flowed like the music of flutes, filling the night ; they fell like a pouring rain, and rushed on like rivers. At moments they ceased ; then such silence followed that one might almost hear the snow thawing on the heights under the warm breath of May. It was an ambrosial night.

On that night came Peter and Paul, and sat on the highest grass-mound of the slope to pass judgment on the gods of antiquity. The heads of the Apostles were encircled by halos, which illuminated their gray hair, stern brows, and severe eyes. Below, in the deep shade of beeches, stood the assembly of gods, abandoned and in dread, awaiting their sentence.

## *PETER AND PAUL*

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Peter motioned with his hand, and at the sign Zeus stepped forth first from the assembly and approached the Apostles. The Cloud-Compeller was still mighty, and as huge as if cut out of marble by Phidias, but weakened and gloomy. His old eagle dragged along at his feet with broken wing, and the blue thunderbolt, grown reddish in places from rust, and partly quenched, seemed to be slipping from the stiffening right hand of the former father of gods and men. But when he stood before the Apostles the feeling of ancient supremacy filled his broad breast. He raised his head haughtily, and fixed on the face of the aged fisherman of Galilee his proud and glitter-

## *THE JUDGMENT OF*

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ing eyes, which were as angry and as terrible as lightnings.

Olympus, accustomed to tremble before its ruler, shook to its foundations. The beeches quivered with fear, the song of the nightingales ceased, and the moon sailing above the snows grew as white as the linen web of Arachne. The eagle screamed through his crooked beak for the last time, and the lightning, as if animated by its ancient force, flashed and began to roar terribly at the feet of its master; it reared, hissed, snapped, and raised its three-cornered, flaming forehead, like a serpent ready to stab with poisonous fang. But Peter pressed the fiery bolts with his foot and crushed them to the earth. Turn-

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ing then to the Cloud-Compeller, he pronounced this sentence: "Thou art cursed and condemned through all eternity." At once Zeus was extinguished. Growing pale in the twinkle of an eye, he whispered, with blackening lips, "*Ἀνάγκη*" ("Necessity"), and vanished through the earth.

Poseidon of the dark curls next stood before the Apostles, with night in his eyes, and in his hand the blunted trident. To him then spoke Peter:

"It is not thou who wilt rouse the billows. It is not thou who wilt lead the storm-tossed ships to a quiet haven, but she who is called the 'Star of the Sea.'"

## *THE JUDGMENT OF*

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When Poseidon heard this he screamed, as if pierced with sudden pain, and turned into vanishing mist.

Next rose Apollo, the Silver-bowed, with a hollow lute in his hand, and walked toward the holy men. Behind him moved slowly the nine Muses, looking like nine white pillars. Terror-stricken, they stood before the judgment-seat, as if petrified, breathless, and without hope; but the radiant Apollo turned to Paul, and, in a voice which resembled wondrous music, said :

“ Slay me not ! Protect me, lord ; for shouldst thou slay me, thou wouldst have to restore me to life again. I am the blossom of the soul of humanity ; I am its gladness ; I

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am light; I am the yearning for God. Thou knowest best that the song of earth will not reach heaven if thou break its wings. Hence I implore thee, O saint, not to smite down Song."

A moment of silence came. Peter raised his eyes toward the stars. Paul placed his hands on his sword-hilt, rested his forehead on them, and for a time fell into deep thought. At last he rose, made the sign of the cross calmly above the radiant head of the god, and said :

"Let Song live !"

Apollo sat down with his lute at the feet of the Apostle. The night became clearer, the jasmine gave out a stronger perfume, the glad foun-

## *THE JUDGMENT OF*

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tains sounded, the Muses gathered together like a flock of white swans, and, with voices still quivering from fear, began to sing in low tones marvellous words never heard on the heights of Olympus till that hour :

To thy protection we flee, holy Mother  
of God.

We come with our prayers ; deign thou  
not to reject us,

But be pleased to preserve us from every  
evil,

O thou, our Lady !

Thus they sang on the heather, raising their eyes like pious nuns with heads covered with white.

Other gods came now. Bacchus and his chorus dashed past, wild, unrestrained, crowned with ivy and



## *PETER AND PAUL*

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grapevine, and bearing the cithara and the thyrsus. They rushed on madly, with shouts of despair, and fell into the bottomless pit.

Then before the Apostles stood a lofty, proud, sarcastic divinity, who, without waiting for question or sentence, spoke first. On her lips was a smile of derision.

“I am Pallas Athene. I do not beg life of you. I am an illusion, nothing more. Odysseus honored and obeyed me only when he had become senile. Telemachus listened to me only till hair covered his chin. Ye cannot take immortality from me, and I declare that I have been a shadow, that I am a shadow now, and shall remain a shadow forever.”

## *THE JUDGMENT OF*

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At last her turn came to the most beautiful, the most honored goddess. As she approached, sweet, marvellous, tearful, the heart under her snow-white breast beat like the heart in a bird, and her lips quivered like those of a child that fears cruel punishment. She fell at their feet, and, stretching forth her divine arms, cried in fear and humility :

“I am sinful, I deserve blame, but I am Joy. Have mercy, forgive ; I am the one happiness of mankind.” Then sobbing and fear took away her voice.

But Peter looked at the goddess with compassion, and placed his aged palm on her golden hair, while Paul, bending toward a cluster of white

## PETER AND PAUL

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field-lilies, broke off one blossom, and touching her with it, said :

“ Joy, be henceforth like this flower, and live thou for mankind.”

Then came dawn — the divine dawn that looked out from beyond a depression between two peaks. The nightingales stopped singing, and immediately finches, linnets, and wrens began to draw their sleepy little heads from under their moistened wings, shaking the dew from their feathers, and repeating in low voices, “ *Svit ! svit !* ” ( “ Light ! light ! ” ).

The earth awoke, smiled, and was delighted, because Song and Joy had not been taken from it.



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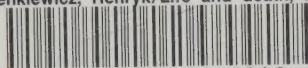
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